

BALLET

TODAY

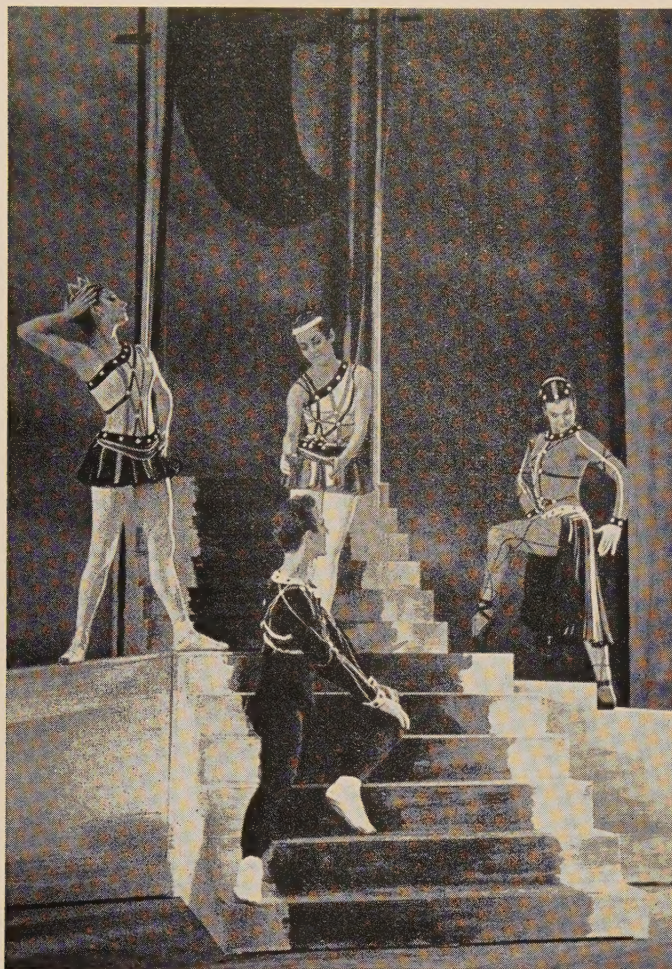
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MARILYN BURR JOHN GILPIN BELINDA WRIGHT of FESTIVAL BALLET

JULY, 1956

FULL BALLET GUIDE FOR THE MONTH



FESTIVAL BALLET

Summer Season at *Festival Hall*

Season opens 8 p.m. Wednesday, 11 July

Evenings at 8 p.m. Matinees (Wednesdays, Saturdays and August Bank Holiday) at 2.30 p.m.

Wed. 11 July to Mon. 16 July	<i>Les Sylphides: Homage to a Princess</i> (London Première); <i>Etudes</i>
Tues. 17 July to Sat. 21 July	<i>Swan Lake</i> (Act II); <i>The Nutcracker</i> (Full Version)
Mon. 23 July to Wed. 25 July	<i>Scheherazade; Homage to a Princess; Napoli</i>
Thur. 26 July to Sat. 28 July	<i>Scheherazade; Homage to a Princess; Etudes</i>
Mon. 30 July to Wed. 1 Aug.	<i>Grand Divertissement (La Esmeralda); Les Deux Errants</i> (London Première); <i>Le Spectre de la Rose; Prince Igor</i>
Thur. 2 Aug. to Sat. 4 Aug.	<i>Swan Lake</i> (Act II); <i>Les Deux Errants; Le Spectre de la Rose; Prince Igor</i>
Mon. 6 Aug. to Wed. 8 Aug.	<i>Swan Lake</i> (Act II); <i>The Nutcracker</i> (Full Version)
Thur. 9 Aug. to Sat. 11 Aug.	<i>Les Sylphides; Petrouchka; Etudes</i>

NADIA NERINA and ALEXIS RASSINE

in

Ballet Highlights

W/c. July 2	<i>New Theatre, Oxford</i>
9	<i>Royal Court, Liverpool</i>
16	<i>Grand Theatre, Leeds</i>
23	<i>Opera House, Manchester</i>

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

At the *Edinburgh Festival* for two weeks, Aug. 20 to Sept. 1

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE BALLET

At the *Music Festival Granada, Spain*, June 26 and 28
Svetlana Beriosova will appear as guest artist

HUNGARIAN STATE DANCE COMPANY

At the *Palace Theatre* until July 14th
Evenings at 7.45. Saturdays at 5.15 and 8.45

POLISH FOLK DANCE COMPANY

14th July. *Scala Theatre, London*. 2.30 and 7.30



Top : *Homage to a Princess*

Below : *Les Deux Errants*

Two new ballets which are to be seen in London for the first time during the Festival Ballet Season

Both photographs are by Leon Ward

Cover Portrait :

MARILYN BURR, JOHN GILPIN

AND

BELINDA WRIGHT

Photo : - - - - - Jean Straker

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Elvin leaves Covent Garden

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Nadia Nerina to go on tour

THE dates of the exchange visits of the Bolshoi Theatre and the Sadler's Wells Ballet Company have now been announced by Mr. David L. Webster general administrator of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. The Bolshoi Ballet, headed by the famous ballerina Galina Ulanova and comprising 90 dancers and about ten technicians will open a three and a half week season at Covent Garden on Wednesday October 3rd. The season will end on Saturday evening October 27th. Ballerinas Maya Plisetskaya and Raissa Struchkova will dance leading roles with Ulanova and the Company will bring Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, *Le Lac des Cygnes* by Tchaikovsky, the Theophile Gautier ballet *Giselle* by Adolphe Adam, and the four-act ballet *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* with music by Boris Asafiev.

Sadler's Wells will take their production of *Le Lac des Cygnes* to Moscow, a number of one-act ballets which will probably include *The Firebird*, *Noctambules*, *Rake's Progress*, *Checkmate*, *Les Patineurs* and others. They will also take Frederick Ashton's ballet *Birthday Offering*, and it is expected that an act from John Cranko's new three-act ballet to music specially composed by Benjamin Britten will also be seen in Moscow. This last ballet is to have its world premiere in September at Covent Garden. The Sadler's Wells will open their three and a half week season on Wednesday November 14th in Moscow, and the season will end on December 8th. The entire Company headed by Dame Margot Fonteyn and Mr. Michael Somes will dance at the Bolshoi Theatre.

Booking for the Bolshoi Theatre ballet season will probably open towards the end of August, but the public are advised that no applications, either at the Box Office or by post, will be accepted until booking plans are announced in the Press later.

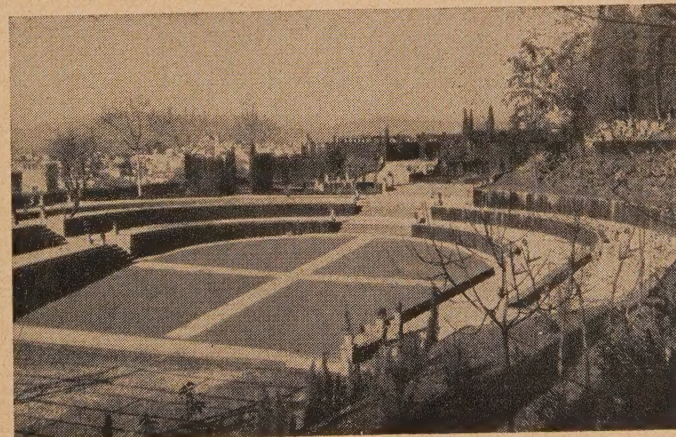
DANCE notation is much in the news just now. Dame Ninette de Valois has invited Ann Hutchinson to give two lectures at the Sadler's Wells Summer Congress. Eugene Loring has just published a book in America about the system of dance notation which he uses. Hanya Holm, the first choreographer to copyright a dance score, is having her dances for the successful new Broadway musical *My Fair Lady*, scored in Labanotation.

and chamber music with soloists are held in one of the marble patios of the old Moorish Alhambra Palace. Although some of the recitals are in the mornings, the majority are held at night, and thousands of coloured lights strung in the trees, add enchantment to the warm night air which is filled with the scent of flowers, and the air is freshened by breezes from the high Sierra Nevada overlooking the town.

BACKSTAGE

THE fifth year of the Music Festival will take place in Granada, Spain, during June, and the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet will be dancing on 26th and 28th in the open air theatre in the Generalife Gardens, a photograph of which appears on this page. The orchestral concerts are held in the huge round courtyard of the Palace of Charles V in the Alhambra, which is only a short distance from the Gardens. The quartets

ONE of the best known ensembles of its kind in Poland, the Lodz Folk Dance Company, will be in Britain for ten days from July 14th, the first visit of any Polish Folk Dance Ensemble since the war. These dancers, singers and musicians have been specially chosen as the most talented artists of their parent Company. Two performances will take place at the Scala Theatre, London, on July 14th, and the Company will then



go on to Glasgow on the 19th and Liverpool on the 21st. Further details from: British Polish Friendship Society, 81, Portland Place, W. 1. Tel. Langham 6593.

LICIA Markova is getting a wonderful press in Rio de Janeiro. In spite of an indisposition which kept her in bed for best part of a week, her dancing in Aurora's Wedding, on the last night of her appearance at the Municipal, was described as "a true miracle of creation". Mario Nunes, critic for the *Jornal do Brasil* describing her dancing in *Death of the Swan*, says "she is a flake—not a body".

Peggy van Praagh has had great success in producing *The Rake's Progress* for the Staatsoper Ballet in Munich. Miss van Praagh, Overseas Producer for the Sadler's Wells Organisation, is now in Canada for two months, where she will join Miss Celia Franca to work with the Canadian National Ballet. She will give special classes to the Company and produce for it Frederick Ashton's *Les Rendezvous*. Miss van Praagh will then go on to Detroit to teach at the 1956 Summer Ballet Seminar, returning to Britain in September to produce a series of ballet programmes for B.B.C. Children's Television.

LAST year, when I went on holiday, I took my typewriter with me, and arranged a shuttle service between France and the printers at home, in order that the magazine should come out on time. The strain was too great, and I found myself working for best part of my holiday. So I am combining the issue for August and September this year, and hope that you will not forget the date—August 24th. As most of you will have had your own holiday by the time we come out with this next issue, I take this opportunity of wishing you a happy vacation.



A. V. COTON

BALLET RAMBERT



WEST COUNTRY BALLET



COVENT GARDEN



THEATRE BALLET



THE HUNGARIANS



MODERN DANCE SCHOOL

LONDON

AS one of the longest seasons yet given by the Sadler's Wells Ballet at Covent Garden draws towards its close, the attractions of other companies and of other sorts of dancing has livened the London scene in recent weeks. Familiar, old ballets have been given with distinction; new ballets and dances have conferred laurels on their choreographers and dancers; some young generation dancers have shown progress—altogether it has been a lively and highly interesting period.

BALLET RAMBERT

The Ballet Rambert still retains its distinct quality as a company capable of bringing a special pleasure by reason of its vast repertoire of unusual ballets or by the dancing of its young stars. Seen for a passing visit at Harrow, it showed Madame Rambert's unimpaired skill as a *regisseur*, through the distinctly above-average productions of *Swan Lake*, Act II, and a new *Coppelia*, Act III; Patricia Dyer in the first and Noreen Sopwith in the second danced with both feeling and sensibility; as with other leading dancers who have passed—or are passing—through Madame Rambert's hands, their artistic qualities are as carefully brought out as their technical aptitude.

WEST COUNTRY BALLET

The West Country Ballet, a fledgling group aiming at a repertoire of works based largely on British life and legends, was launched at the Edinburgh Festival last year; in May it was sponsored by the London Ballet Circle for two performances at the Rudolf Steiner Theatre. What is important here is to note and, if desirable, encourage the trend towards a *different* kind of choreography; Michael Holmes' *Herne the hunter* was the best craftsman's job of the five ballets, and Wendy Hilton made a good try with a tough subject. This was *The Selchie*, based on a West of Scotland legend about seals taking human form; the problems of devising an unique movement-system for the seal-girl and of blending in some Scottish dances smoothly with the rest of the action, were not fully successful. In her other work *A Short Story* she managed to make interesting, if not fully emotionally effective, a very simplified choreographic idiom that may turn into something quite significant. If the director, Miss Frances Crossley, can encourage these, and other, young choreographers to try something that is a little different from the usual pattern of ballet-making, she is to be commended for her daring and her, inevitably, hard work.

ROWENA JACKSON'S SWAN LAKE

Rowena Jackson is the latest of the star-level young dancers at Covent Garden to show a marked ripening of her talent; the difficult test of a full length *Swan Lake* was passed with honour. The whole performance was firmly danced, and the mountain-high problem of being convincing both as Odette and as Odile was courageously faced; where hitherto one has almost invariably been impressed by her technical brilliance and speed, here one saw a strengthening of the *feeling* for the double character: the mime was clear, simple and not overdone, and the firework dazzle of the bravura dancing in Act III came across without any sense of strain. Miss Jackson seems to have suddenly reached a solution to the perennial problem of giving a splendidly danced interpretation which seems absolutely effortless; it will be doubly interesting to see if she can make the mime more and more subtle in further performances.

THEATRE BALLET

After a long period of touring the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet came home for a short season; since last in London it has lost its assistant-director and *regisseur* Peggy van Praagh, and some of its dancers—Maryon Lane, Annette Page, David Blair—have graduated to Covent Garden. It has gained the services of John Field as Resident Director and of Anne Heaton as ballerina, and acquired new ballets by Macmillan and Rodrigues and a new production of *Coppelia*.

Somnambulism, which Kenneth Macmillan first tried at a Choreographic Group performance three years ago, is a "dream-ballet" with the virtues and faults that most works of this genre carry. Three characters are involved in dreams, each of a different nature, and we see their actions and reactions as they dance, with or without or against, a *corps-de-ballet* of six. The Stan Kenton music is acceptable without giving much of significance to the ballet; its rhythms seem to impose too stringent shapes and tempi on the choreography. Margaret Hill, Anne Heaton and Donald Britton danced with a kind of splendid recklessness that was strong, lyrical and seemed perfectly to express what the choreographer wanted.

Solitaire, his newest work, breaks away from what one had thought too strong a liking for the macabre and the horrific, as revealed so abundantly in *House of Birds* and *Noctambules*. Here to highly competent but slightly over-earnest music by Malcolm Arnold, he shows us the gracious, irresponsible, gay side of his prodigious inven-



This page:

*The Hungarian
State Dance
Company*

Opposite page:

*[Somnambulism]
with
Margaret Hill
in Anxiety*

Photo:

Mike Davis

REVIEW

tion. A central character (the solitary one of the title's implication) danced by Margaret Hill, is involved in a series of inexplicable, slightly mad, mostly beautiful, dance-adventures with three males, a female who may be a rival (for what?) and a *corps-de-ballet* which decorates the main action as nicely as does Donald Heeley's decor. This is a fresh view of abstract shapes-and-spaces (which too often in ballet decor assume a strenuousness and heaviness out of keeping with the effect of the dancing). It adds up to one of the most refreshing light ballets seen for a long time on an English stage; and in it Miss Hill shows herself a fine, controlled dancer, and—what she always had—the possessor of a turn of wit in characterisation which makes every moment she is visible a delight.

THE HUNGARIANS

By now we are accustomed to elaborate, large-scaled national groups of dancers and singers from Transcainia; the latest visitors are from Hungary and their programme, with the staggering cast of 130, embraces male and female choirs, bands on stage and in the pit, and a big ensemble of dancers who provide a wide range of the rich and strange kinds of pure, folk dance that this particular culture has bred. The special interest lies in the clear difference between these dances and those of any other European culture; they differ, both obviously and subtly, from the dances of Poland, Russia, and the Balkan countries by being the dances of a people whose lives centred less on the static life of farms and pastures, and more on the restless migrations and general liveliness of a pattern of existence largely based on livestock breeding. The music, too, is much more rhythmically complex than that of the neighbouring peoples. The costumes have distinctive qualities, particularly the men's, which set them quite apart from other folks'; and, of course, in the dances the men have all the fun—leaping, snapping heels together, making large, proud gestures with arms, slapping thighs and heels—while the women usually dance in simple foursquare and diagonal shapes to easier rhythms. No part of the programme showed stars, but there was a general clean competence from all, with the male group of sixteen dancers catching (and deserving) most of the applause.

MODERN DANCE

Although few large Modern Dance companies have been seen here

apart from the Ballets Jooss and Martha Graham's Company, many dance-followers are aware of the existence, and the importance too, of this sort of dancing. It has more practitioners and more adherents in West and North Europe and in America than here, yet its formulas and styles have been making an impact on our Theatre Dancing for some time. For years now the best American musicals (and some of our own, too) have had their dances arranged by choreographers either wholly Modern Dance trained, or who combine Modern Dance and Ballet training with performing experience.

Probably the best Modern Dance school in Europe functions in London, directed by Sigurd Leeder; a recent programme by its staff and pupils showed some works as dramatic, amusing and beautiful as dances created in any other convention. In this system dancers are encouraged to develop their own choreographic talent, and frequently find—when working with only small groups or individuals—that choreography is, if a very strenuous craft, at least not a closed-shop mystery. This fact was clearly demonstrated in dances created and performed by dancers of unique quality, such as Ludmila Mlada, Joan Cox, Jean Cebron; and also in group dances by Sigurd Leeder and Colin Paterick.

Fine costuming, staging, and lighting (the work of students and performers), was backed by flawless recordings of music, made in the school, giving the occasion an air of different and total professionalism, when compared with the average similar event in other dance schools.

On a short visit to London after nearly a year of teaching and performing in Brazil and Argentina, Masami Kuni, Japan's leading Modern Dance theorist, teacher and writer, gave a concentrated course in dance creation technique in mid-June. His students were a mixed group of Modern and Ballet trained—including some full-fledged professionals—and the importance of the course was its showing that Choreography (like Dancing) is not something that "happens", but has rules and methods as precise as those training systems used in music academies and in art schools. Here the elementary rules of dance creation were taught as smoothly and logically as, say, a course in simple mathematics. Mr. Kuni proved himself an inspired and inspiring teacher—not surprising considering that behind his method lies a lifetime of studying, researching and performing in Japan, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Latin-America. Mr. Kuni should come back some time—for a long stay.

THE first day of the University of Chicago's five day arts festival, April 26, featured dancing. In the afternoon, the Hillel Folk Dancers and the Festival Dancers presented a joint programme at Ida Noyes Hall. In the evening, Ruth Page was at Mandel Hall. It was a busy evening for Miss Page, for not only had she choreographed the new ballet-play *Susanna and the Barber*, but she also acted and danced in it and preceded its premiere with a lecture.

It was a mad little lecture; not the divine madness of Delphi, but the delightful madness of an Olympus cupbearer who has stolen a sip from the great feast. Miss Page ranged over many topics and if there was a unifying thread of argument it may have been the how and why of turning opera into ballet, a thing she had done eight times. The how involves a historical survey of the music and story which may have existed in more than one form. Certain situations of the plot or certain melodies strike Ruth Page's fancy; she becomes familiar with these and from them, by a sort of choreographic free association or improvisation she creates movements "on" her dancers. From the material of her improvisations, she selects and develops the form of her ballet. She would like to use new scores for her ballets, but finds them difficult to obtain. She is consequently forced to use old music and prefers opera because, more than symphony, it allows artistic room for rich costumes, elaborate sets, dancing and even dialogue.

The new opera derived ballet-play, *Susanna and the Barber*, is a thoroughly delightful piece of commedia dell'arte, far more entertaining than its immediate predecessors, *Revenge* and *The Merry Widow*, which Ruth Page staged for Lyric Theatre last autumn. It is based on Beaumarchais and Rossini's opera, *Barber of Seville*, borrowing the character of Susanna from Beaumarchais and Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*.

Figaro, the barber of Seville, and his sweetheart, Susanna, initiate the action of the familiar libretto and are also the chorus, interpreting the action for the audience. Consequently, these are primarily speaking roles and Bentley Stone and Ruth Page, dancers by training, acquitted themselves admirably in the dialogue. There is fine, lyric choreography, especially in the scene in which Susanna reads a love letter from Count Almaviva (Kenneth Johnson) to Rosina (Barbara Steele). A chorus of three girls dances the mock passion of the letter's sentiments

while simultaneously Rosina dances her genuine rapture.

All elements of the production, the Page dances, Antoni Clave's designs, Ira Wollack's verses and Isaac Van Grove's Rossini, build into a thrilling theatrical climax in the scene which corresponds to the slander song of the opera. The spirit of commedia dell'arte of the entire production was engendered by the appropriate obviousness of rhyme and mime.

On the afternoon of April 29, at the St. Alphonsus Athenaeum Theatre, Bentley Stone, from the cast of the ballet-play, presented his own short ballet, *In My Back Yard*, on an otherwise long programme. To the music of Villa Lobos, four characters—a boy, a girl and their two duennas—spend an afternoon outdoors. The duennas are dressed as black silk boxes with only their arms showing. Each holds a white fan which complements the cap atop the box. They stand, whispering behind their fans, with the girl demurely between them, while the boy plays. The duennas shift their position and momentarily two very pretty pairs of legs can be seen under the boxes. The boy, who has previously paid no attention to the girl (still between the duennas) now lures her out to play. She finally comes; he pushes her to the ground and rushes to occupy the place between the duennas. The curtain falls on his smug look. (One must imagine the children to be about fourteen.)

George Jackson.

NEW YORK

IN August last year we gave news of the activities of the Dance Department of the School of Performing Arts, which, sponsored by the New York City Board of Education, provides free dance training for children as part of their High School education. Their annual concert was held on June 2nd and 3rd and a very varied dance programme of repertoire and new works was arranged. Selected students from the Performing Arts Music Department provided the music. Labanotation is also taught at the school and our photograph shows a previous performance of Doris Humphrey's *Desert Gods* from *Song of the West*, staged by Els Grelinger from a Labanotation score. When the work was nearly ready for performance the choreographer, Miss Humphrey, watched one rehearsal before granting permission for its inclusion in one of the school's concert programmes. In addition to dance and music there is also a drama department.

AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE is to have a new fully-equipped live theatre. Ballet master, Charles Lisner, formerly a member of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, has announced that he has bought a site, comprising two adjoining properties in Wharf Street. The site has been approved for this purpose by the

City Council, and it is expected that the theatre will be ready in about 18 months. As well as being a commercial theatre, the new building will be the headquarters of a permanent ballet company based in Queensland. It will also house the Lisner Ballet Academy. The ballet practice room will be among the largest and best equipped in the world. The theatre will hold between 800 and 1,000 people. The stage will be a large one, capable of taking spectacular productions in ballet, opera or drama. Up-to-the-minute mechanical and lighting equipment will be used, and there will be ample wing and backstage areas with modern dressing rooms and a scene dock.

In making this announcement Mr. Lisner said the forming of a permanent ballet company in association with the new theatre would give a boost to ballet in Queensland. Brisbane and its surroundings had proved, during the Borovansky season just ended, to be one of the most enthusiastic centres for ballet in Australia. Considerable dancing talent existed locally and was ready for development. Mr. Lisner founded the Queensland National Theatre Association in 1954 for the purpose of building a National Theatre, but as his invitations to interested bodies to join the Association failed to produce any co-ordinated or decisive effort, he has now decided to build this new theatre, of which he will be the sole principal, and for which financial arrangements have already been made.



from the World

EGYPT

A SPECIAL plane brought to Cairo the ensemble of fifty dancers of the Russian Beryozka Dance Troupe, directed by Mme. Nadiejda Nadiejdina. It was in 1948 that she founded this group, which has attained international renown and gained first prize at the Budapest World Festival.

The Ensemble gave four shows at the Opera in Cairo where the performances were distinguished by the presence of M. G. Golov, Vice-Director of the Moscow theatres. They had a brilliant success in Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said, and have returned to Cairo for a new series of performances. Their programme included *Vorotzka*, *Topotoukha* and *Tsepoitchka*, to a rapid cadence which created a blinding whirl of attitudes, movements and geometric figures, tightly linked by the rhythm and skill of a superb team, which was greatly appreciated by the audience. Folklore dancing, as one finds it in the villages, is difficult to translate to the stage. The choreographer's task is to first steep himself in folklore and then create the dance according to his personal conception of it. Mme. Nadiejdina has accomplished this.

The programme presented in Cairo, with the assistance of Lenide Wladimirov, the virtuoso of the balalaika, had a charmingly poetic effect, and was a spectacle of grace which attained the pure classicism of folklore ballet.

WALENS

GERMANY

THE photographs on this page were taken on the stage of Prinzregenten Theatre and shew the Munich State Opera Ballet. Alan Carter's ballet *Mr. Scrooge* (*Der bekehrte Geizhals*)—easily recognisable to an English audience as a ballet version of Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol—did not meet an audience in Germany sufficiently prepared to follow the plot in every detail. All the more surprising therefore that it "brought the house down".

In twelve sketches Carter created a model psychological ballet. Franz Baur as Scrooge completely carried away the audience with his intense acting. Remarkable among the scenes—some of which were a little too sketchy—was Scene No. 7 with a pas de six, which included the young Scrooge and his fiancée (Heino Hallhuber and Annette Chappell). Music was by Josef

Suk, decor, costumes and choreography by Alan Carter. The photograph of *Giselle* is worth seeing for the difference in the decor, and this has caused much controversy.

WILFRIED HOFMANN

YUGOSLAVIA

THREE new ballets have been presented at the National Opera House, Ljubljana, with choreography by Pia and Pino Mlakar, who will be remembered for their work in *The Devil and the Village*, performed in February last year at the Stoll Theatre, London.

The *Beautiful Vida* is the longest of the three ballets, and is based on a Slovene folk legend, with music by Vilko Ukmar. The second ballet, *Love and Litigation* set in the inns of court in 18th century London, has music by Handel. Decor and costumes by Nora and John Lavrin.

The third ballet, with choreography, decor and costumes by Pia and Pino Mlaker is an experiment in which the dancers themselves provide the percussion rhythm.

Veronika Mlakar, the daughter of Pino and Pia, has recently appeared in London with the Roland Petit Ballet. She will be remembered for her sensational dancing in the new Petit ballet *La Chambre*, in which she takes the role of the murderess with Buzz Miller as her victim.

Top: *Mister Scrooge* with Heino Hallhuber and Annette Chappell

Below: *Giselle* Act II with Irene Skorik as *Giselle*, Heino Hallhuber as *Albrecht*, Joan Harris as *Queen of the Wilis*

Photos: - - - Rudolf Betz



TWO years ago I wrote an article in *Ballet Today* on Fonteyn's *Firebird* which included an interview with Karsavina. This started a long and exciting controversy, in which the authenticity of Fonteyn's interpretation was clearly established. One very interesting point made by Karsavina was that Russian folk-lore was much influenced from the East, and that the *Firebird* can be traced back to India. That was why Karsavina made her interpretation (and her make-up) very exotic when she created the role, and encouraged Fonteyn to do the same. I do not know whether or not Fonteyn has ever seen Kathakali, the intensely dramatic classical dance-drama of South India, but I noticed that as she built up the *Firebird* role from one performance to another she moved closer and closer to Kathakali. (This was particularly clear in her eye and head movements and in her breathing.)

A remarkable and definitive book has now been published: *Kathakali*, by K. Bharata Iyer (Luzac, £3 3s.). This deals in a vivid and comprehensive way with many aspects of this great art, with traditions extending back by various paths to the very origins of dance and drama. Appendix III is particularly fascinating, for here one can read extracts from the Kathakali dance-drama *Nala-Carita* (*Nala and the Golden Swan*) based on one of the greatest love stories in a mythology rich in love-stories. King Nala, listlessly wandering in his garden, comes across a golden swan sleeping beside the lotus pond. The king desires to possess this marvellous bird; he tip-toes up and seizes it. "Rudely awakened and finding itself a captive, the bird, screaming in terror, piteously wails and begs for the mercy of the king." Eventually the king sets the bird free, and in return it brings together Nala and his beloved.

This is, of course, the Hindu myth which is the principal origin of the Russian *Firebird* fairy-tales: how exciting to find it used in a Kathakali dance-drama! Let us hope that one day we shall see the Kathakali version of the myth. Meanwhile we can enjoy Mr. Iyer's book, which should be in every public library.

BENESH DANCE NOTATION

Kathakali is sumptuously produced with a large number of illustrations, including many beautiful drawings by the Indian artist Chavda of the great Kathakali dancer and choreographer Krishna Kutty, seen in London when the New Indian Ballet appeared at the Comedy Theatre in 1952. But the author is naturally unable to give readers who have never seen Kathakali any clear idea of the type of movement used in Kathakali. A corresponding book on an exotic style of music would have included a good many musical illustrations in music notation; only recently, however, has the invention of the Benesh Dance Notation made it possible to notate dance movements with the same precision and economy that one takes for granted in music notation.

Because the Beneshes developed their system in close contact with the day-to-day working and repertoire of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, and it has been adopted by the Wells, there is a widespread misapprehension that it is suited only to the classical ballet technique. In fact it is a visual system which records the actual paths traced out by the limbs, and so is equally suited to all forms of dancing. Looking into the future, I decided to ask the Beneshes to record some classical Indian dancing, so that we could get an idea how future books on Indian dancing (or new editions of Mr. Iyer's book) may be illustrated.

Fortunately a great exponent of Indian classical dancing was available and agreed to co-operate: no less fortunately, she had been

trained in Kathakali by Krishna Kutty. I asked her to demonstrate for the Beneshes an extract from a Kathakali ball dance, arranged for her by Krishna Kutty; this extract is illustrated, below, showing the dancer giving an imaginary ball a downward pat and watching it fly up from the ground. (Here one can see another link with *The Firebird*, which includes a ball dance). In Kathakali, eye movements are as important as foot movements in Western ballet, and the Beneshes have noted carefully the upward flick of the eyes which suggests the flight of the ball.

It was fascinating for me to watch the Beneshes tackling a new and complex style of dancing; for in this way I was able to understand how they had been able to succeed where generation after generation of *maitres de ballet* have failed for three hundred years. They made a perfect team, tackling the problems in ways suited to the temperament of each and working together with a flexibility, speed and intuitive telepathic *rapport* perfected in nine years of close collaboration. Rudolf Benesh—short, slight and very serious—worked with the quiet, abstracted concentration natural to a painter-musician: one could see him forming images in his mind and then transcribing them coolly and systematically on to paper. Joan Benesh, in violent contrast, tackled the problems with the spontaneous exuberance natural in a soubrette dancer: she analyzed the movements by dancing every detail of them herself, to the best of her ability, before putting anything on paper.

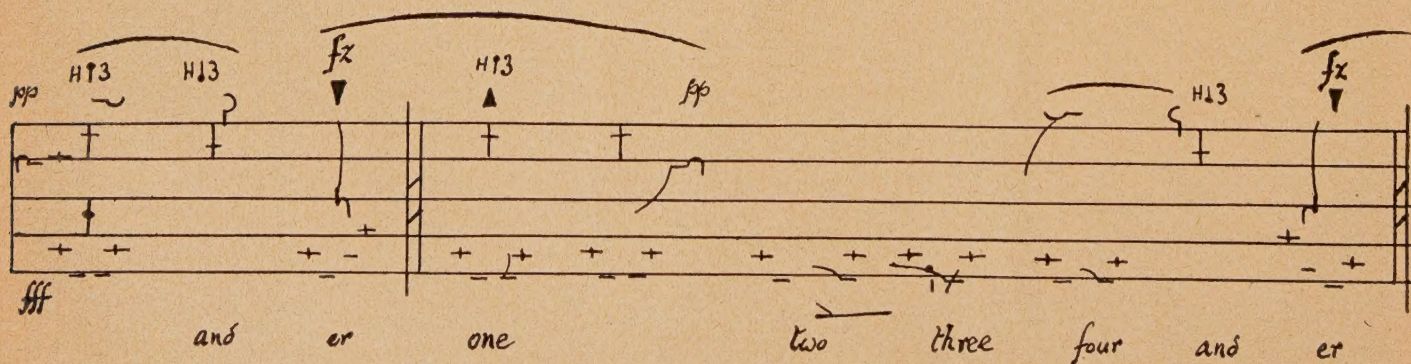
I was chiefly concerned with obtaining a specimen of Kathakali notated in precise detail. But when the Beneshes saw some phrases of Bharata Natyam—a classical Indian style of which the arm movements are the most complex of any dance-style—they at once accepted the challenge, and set to work on one of the most fiendishly complicated of Bharata Natyam phrases, with feet, arms, hands and head all moving in separate rhythms. It was a supreme test of their system, and their success in tackling this *adavu* made me confident that there is no problem in dance notation for which they cannot find a simple and elegant solution.

MARIANNE BALCHIN

The great Indian classical dancer who kindly demonstrated for the Beneshes is in fact an English girl, Marianne Balchin, who up to now has danced in Indian companies under the Indian name Mrinalini, and has been accepted by audiences and critics without question as Indian. This was not surprising, for she performs in pure Indian classical style, and her face with its large, slanting eyes has an exotic beauty which is far more Oriental than English. (Such faces are not uncommon in Kashmir, and for this reason Indians and Pakistanis take her to be a Kashmiri.) Mrinalini-Marianne began her Indian career in 1948, when she learned the Cochin school of Kathakali from the distinguished Kathakali dancer Sivaram, dancing opposite him (in the role of the seductive demi-goddess Mohini) in a condensed version of the traditional Kathakali dance-drama *Rugmangadan*. Later she became for a time a soloist in Ram Gopal's company, learning from him the classical style Bharata Natyam; at this same period she became a pupil of the Kathak master Pandit Radhelal Misra, being initiated by him into the secrets of the Jaipur school of Kathak. In 1952 she became a soloist in the Indian company Nritya Darpana (which performed in England under the name New Indian Ballet), studying the Travancore school of Kathakali with Guru Krishna Kutty, and studying the classical style Manipuri with Khurshed Vajifdar. Then her career was interrupted by the arrival of a baby

Contd. on Page 21

Kathakali Ball Dance



HOW A BALLET IS BORN

An Exclusive Ballet Today
Interview With

JOHN CRANKO

MODERNISM in Ballet can no longer be brushed aside as a mere camouflage for lack of knowledge. The conservative who condemns a new work simply because it refuses to conform to the time-honoured classical pattern has failed to move with the times. He may go on bleating dismally "This is not ballet"... but that simply is no longer true. Nowadays the door to entertainment stands wide open; there are no taboos, and whatever is diverting, challenging or dramatic can be treated balletically. There are, of course, some psychological situations that "date"—dramatic tangles that have no meaning for the present-day spectator unless the people who wrestle with them on the stage are palpably children of their own age, and of no other. Then costumes, background and behaviour must necessarily supply the clue. A classless Society cannot comprehend the invisible barriers between classes which constitute a definite stage in sociological study, unless the sense of them emerges from their proper setting. But the same also applies in reverse. Young choreographers, chary of venturing into mental territory with which their generation has lost touch, feel compelled to treat modern problems modernistically, and this, in ballet, can only be done by inventing an entirely new dance convention.

"What would you say is the distinguishing feature of your own approach to choreography?" I asked John Cranko.

"Without any disrespect to the classical tradition, I aim to present the human being, in all that he does and feels, as an abstraction. That is my main purpose in the dances I create," he replied.

"When you analyse it, it is merely a new way of expressing a very old axiom," he continued. "Every age has its own convention. For instance, by the rules of the realistic approach, a dancer may suddenly subside gracefully to the ground. People who are accustomed to this would not dream of supposing that she does it because her knees have suddenly given way. They accept the convention. They know that when she does a bourré, this is an abstract image which creates a known effect."

"But the modern choreographer, in my opinion, feels that this realistic approach to ballet has passed right out of date."

"We have arrived at the stage where a new kind of poetic imagery has become necessary. The convention resorted to makes no pretence of realism; nevertheless, it does convey human experiences and recognisable emotions."

"Quite a revolution," I remarked. "But not entirely a sudden one?"

"No," replied Mr. Cranko. "It has been creeping on, in bits, for some time. Balanchine has created a visual equation of musical patterns, deliberately suppressing all meaning. Martha Graham has invented a whole new system of establishing relationship of dancers (a) to each other; (b) to a prop or object; (c) to a convention in space. Sometimes she achieves an effect of violent agitation by fairly static poses, and, conversely, a feeling of tranquility through very full, flowing movement."



"In my opinion, the task of the modern choreographer is to bring about a wedding of these two methods, Balanchine's and Martha Graham's," continued Mr. Cranko.

"Your striking revue, *Crank's*, was certainly a step in that direction," I remarked. "But perhaps you could tell me how *The Lady and the Fool* came into being?"

"That," he replied, "was partly due to an urge I had to do something with Charles Mackerras, of whose musical talent I have the highest opinion. I had already invented the story—in my work, the story usually comes first. My original idea was to create the ballet to modern music. But Mackerras suggested extracting music from some of the early Verdi operas, and the whole of that side was more or less his idea. In my opinion this music matched the theme and its sentiment admirably. I agree that nostalgia is a valuable ingredient in ballet, but I am constantly thrown back on the desire to create something representative of my own time. Perhaps it will seem that my new ballet, *The Prince of the Pagodas*, achieves both objects. Here, again, the story came first. Like most people, I suppose I heard a great many fairy stories when I was young, but I did not really begin to appreciate their

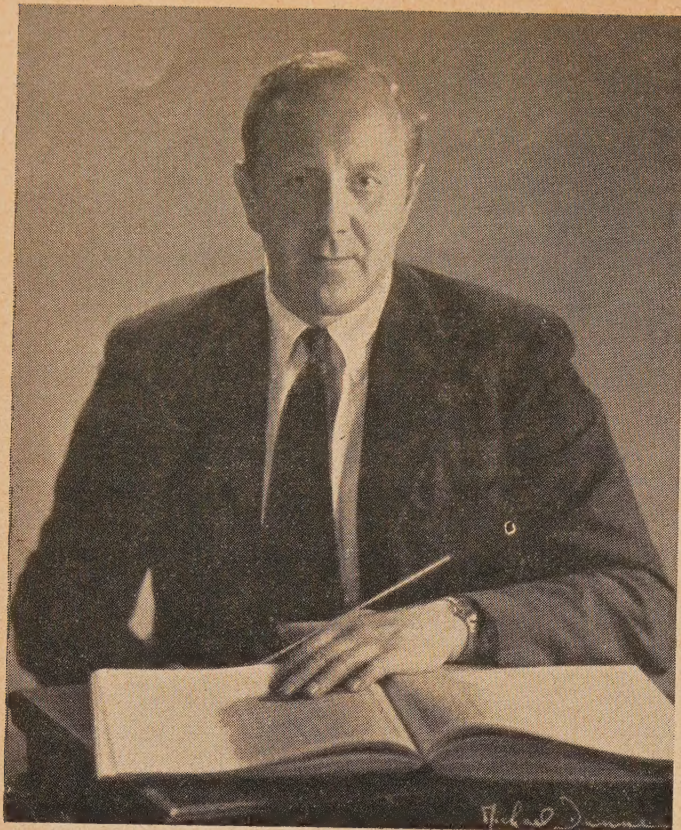
charm until I was grown up, when I started reading them for myself. *The Prince of the Pagodas* is my own original work, but I have drawn on so many memories of fairy tales I have read that I am hoping people will leave the theatre saying: "I'm sure I've heard that story somewhere before." It is not meant to be original; its chief aim is to be evocative."

And in the various magical episodes—the transformation of the Emerald Casket, the Four Frogs, the Pagodas that grow, and the snake that sheds its skin—Mr. Cranko has discovered endless opportunities for displaying his skill in character delineation as well as a love of magic.

"Were you by any chance a conjurer as a child?" I asked.

"Well, as a matter of fact, I was. And I do not at all disdain conjuring tricks as an aid to ballet. After all, the proscenium at Covent Garden is a pretty large frame to fill. And modern audiences have been so pampered with cinematographic and television marvels that they need something really breath-taking to bring them to the edges of their seats! A little magic is quite legitimate and it fits perfectly into the fairy-tale theme."

Interview by ELISABETHE CORATHIEL



Robert Irving

Photo: Michael Dunne

"THE absence of glitter in *Cinderella* was due to a sagging tempo and a missing virility in the orchestral playing," wrote Montague Calman in the April issue of *BALLET TODAY* while commenting on the current season's Ballet at Covent Garden.

The Editor has very kindly given me an opportunity to reply—and as this is an entirely gentlemanly bout, let me start right away by a courteous acknowledgement that Mr. Calman's ears probably did not deceive him on the particular evening when he attended the performance.

I can remember my disappointment after the first act at the playing of the strings (and incidentally the leader was equally upset) especially as at the previous matinee, which was actually the first performance, we had secured some of the best and freshest playing I could remember. I discovered that the reason for the limp bowing-arms and glum faces was that the management had just announced some arrangements for the coming tour, with which some of the players violently disagreed! An orchestra, after all, is made up of human beings, subject to all the vagaries of human nature. I defy anyone to find an orchestra, anywhere in the world, that is not variable in quality, and this especially applies to Opera House orchestras who have longer hours and none of the excitement and glamour of the concert platform.

I suppose our Covent Garden orchestra is the most overworked orchestra in the country, if not in the world, and, taking it all round, I think it acquits itself most creditably.

Take, for instance, those periods of the year when performances of ballet follow whole days spent in rehearsing *The Ring*. Although we do not use entirely the same combination of instruments for every work, a large proportion of our best players have to appear in the orchestra-pit at night with a heavy day's effort already behind them. The sheer physical labour of playing those millions of notes is bound to tell, and you could scarcely expect any orchestra to scintillate right through the evening under such trying circumstances.

Mr. Calman is of course quite right to insist on the best, and only the best should be good enough for Covent Garden; but I must insist that, along with the general rise in orchestral standards over the last ten years, the orchestral playing at Covent Garden is of a much higher overall standard than in the earlier post-war years. What is even more certain is the immeasurable rise in musical standards of the audience and the critics. I attribute this advance to the influence of "hi-fi". Nowadays every major work is available in 4 or 5 first-class recordings, which represent the summit of interpretation in ideal conditions after the most careful preparation. No haste or strain; no audience reactions, no mechanical inadequacies due to stage or pit-design. If there is an ideal atmosphere in which to

"Let the Oboes Sing"

ROBERT IRVING

Musical Adviser

to the

Sadler's Wells Ballet

replies to

MONTAGUE CALMAN

perform, the recording studio supplies it. Similarly, the ideal place in which to hear such superbly created music is in the luxurious comfort of a private room, with every acoustic aid to enhance its quality.

On such high standards a new generation of music lovers is being brought up, and the expectation it brings to instrumental performance is a challenge to every modern musician. But it should always be remembered that, in the open theatre, conditions are not so ideal as they are in the music room with high-fidelity equipment, and considerable allowance ought to be made in judging the orchestral performance at Covent Garden, where acoustics are by no means ideal. I have taken considerable pains to go into this question, and I have found by personal experience that the Opera houses of Paris, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Milan, Rome and Naples are far superior to Covent Garden in the matter of orchestral acoustics, quite apart from the fact that in all these cities the resident orchestras work under far more favourable conditions as regards rehearsal time and necessary rest. For recent performances of *The Ring* the now enlarged pit was used, with the removal of another row of stalls! The increased brightness of sound was immediately noticeable, and I wish we could have this advantage for ballet performances.

Mr. Calman disagrees with my statement that "only the dancers know how the conductor can make or mar a performance". The Ballet conductor has many hundreds of small facts to learn about the steps, the capabilities of particular dancers, and the importance of when to lead and when to be led. These can only be learned by experience of performances and can hardly be appreciated by the onlooker, when there is no real method of learning or teaching them for the professional musician. Experience has shown that many excellent conductors are incapable of learning these facts, which are quite removed from musicianship and depend on a sense of movement. I have hardly even seen the absence or presence of these qualities correctly assessed by critics, although they will be immediately apparent to most of the dancers. I do not for a moment suggest that all these problems are correctly solved at Covent Garden, but I cannot resist quoting the recent comment of one of our most brilliant and acuteminded composers, who described the ballet-conductor's job as "probably the most difficult and certainly the most ungrateful position in the country".

And finally let us remember that ballet music is becoming increasingly difficult, and can be relied on to discover the weak spots in any orchestra's potential. So, while I agree with Mr. Calman about the thrill inherent in the "sweet cry of the woodwind", I crave a little indulgence. By all means let the oboes sing—but please do not expect musicians to achieve a constant succession of miracles, and remember that nowadays the cry can unfortunately be sweeter and clearer in one's own room than in the theatre!



CAREERS IN PICTURES NO. 1

NADIA NERINA

NADIA NERINA is the only ballerina in Sadler's Wells Ballet (apart from Margot Fonteyn) who has danced the leading role in all six of the full-length ballets, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Coppelia*, *Cinderella*, *Sylvia* and *Giselle*. Her favourite ballet is *Sylphides*, of which she says "it is romantic, simple—complete". Of course this choice may have some connection with the fact that it was with this ballet that she had her first chance at Sadler's Wells in 1948.

Nadia has been dancing continuously since the age of nine, has travelled all over Europe with ballet, toured the United States and, with her partner Alexis Rassine, gave two recital tours in South Africa, her native continent—she was born in Cape Town. These tours took her to Portuguese East Africa, S.W. Africa, the Union of S. Africa

and to Northern and Southern Rhodesia. The first tour was for three months in 1952, and the second for four months in 1955. On being asked if she preferred dancing in one country more than another she replied she didn't mind where she danced "as long as the audience enjoy it, I enjoy dancing for the sheer love of dancing".

Her hobbies are making hats, walking, collecting antique furniture and china swans, and at the moment she has about twenty different swans. The hats she makes for herself and has a different one for every occasion.

It is a well-known cliché to describe a star as "really a home girl at heart" but in Nadia's case it is true. She is now married, enjoys cooking and home life, and adores her Siamese cat, which she has named "Entre Chat".

We have chosen this photograph to open our new feature Careers in Pictures, because it is probably the only shot of its kind. One does not normally see a famous ballerina in a circus ring. This was taken during the 1952 Command Performance at Bertram Mills' Circus, when Nadia danced a solo specially choreographed for her for this occasion.

Nadia Nerina





NADIA NERINA

roles danced

Swan Lake
Sleeping Beauty
Coppelia
Cinderella
Sylvia
Giselle
Sylphides
Madame Angot
Scenes de Ballet
Boutique Fantasque
Facade
Homage to the Queen
Mardi Gras
Khadra
Noctambules
Birthday Piece
Spectre de la Rose
Boleras de la Cachucha
Carnaval
Casse Noisette Act II
Vagabonds
Don Quixote
Bon Bouche
Wedding Bouquet

Photographs on this page :

Sleeping Beauty

Photo : - - - Maurice Seymour

Top, left to right

The Can-Can from

La Boutique Fantasque

Photo : - - - Helga Sharland

Sylvia

The Spanish Dance,

with Alexis Rassiné

(Television Performance)

Bottom, left to right

Don Quixote

The Dying Swan

NADIA NERINA At Home



Alexis Rassine calls on Nadia Nerina at her Kensington flat. After an inspection of shoes, dresses . . . and the state of the cooking . . . Nadia rewards Alexis with a cup of tea.



Royal Danish Ballet

by

GERARD BOURKE



Far from Denmark Act 1

Photo: H. J. Mydtskov

THE Royal Danish Ballet ended their annual festival on May 31st with performances of Bournonville's romantic ballet *La Sylphide*, and Lichine's *Graduation Ball* in which the famous character dancer, Gerda Karstens, who has been with the company for 46 years, made her farewell appearance. King Frederick was present to lead the affectionate tribute to a great dancer, and a brief encore was allowed during her pas de deux with the general, though a Danish critic told me it was the first he had seen there for 30 years. Her performances as Madge in *La Sylphide* and Bertha in *Giselle* had been brilliant.

The company's new production of *Fanfare* by Jerome Robbins, to Britten's "Young person's guide to the Orchestra" was elegantly danced. The ballet contains choreography perfectly wedded to the score, as when a harp glissando is interpreted as a cartwheel, the tottering solo for double-bass, and the clever, sharp percussion pas de trois. The particular timbre of each instrument is also deftly conveyed; Irene Sharaff's decor is less satisfactory, though the musical emblems might form sign-posts for Britten's "Young person". All the dancers wear coronets, excusable only since it was first performed in America on coronation day.

Bournonville's vaudeville ballet *Far from Denmark* told of escapades aboard a Danish frigate visiting Buenos Aires a century ago; the consul's daughter, Rosita, was beautifully portrayed by Kirsten Ralov, and Frank Schaufuss, who now succeeds Niels Bjørn Larsen as the company's ballet master, gave a dazzling display as her Argentinian admirer. The frigate evidently collected dancers on its voyages to judge by the divertissements given on board—including an amusing dance for two eskimos (Inge Sand and Fredbjørn Bjørnsson). The attractive, light score is by the Dane, H. C. Lumbye, and his associates: composite ballets were favoured by Bournonville, though his favourite composer was Mozart, whose *Figaro* and *The Magic Flute* were performed during the festival.

Emilie Walbom's ballet *Dream Pictures*, also with music by their private Johann Strauss, was revived for the festival. Hans Christian Anderson rests in the luxuriant Tivoli of old, and in fantasy he sees commedia-dell'arte figures—as seen in the famous Tivoli pantomime, of to-day—arise. As a musical portrait of Tivoli the ballet, superbly danced, especially by Margrethe Schanne in the Columbine polka, and the final salute for Bournonville, is an attractive lightweight. It was preceded by *Giselle* in which Margrethe Schanne, whom I admire most among their girl dancers, showed her truer poetic talents, as she did so brilliantly in *La Sylphide*. Erik Bruhn, who is shortly returning to Ballet Theatre in America, danced Albrecht with wonderful precision and élan, yet I still find his dancing too often cold and impersonal, as was particularly evident when he undertook the Prince in the pas de deux from *Casse Noisette* with Kirsten Simone.

Napoli is danced at each festival, remaining one of the company's

most popular ballets; Børge Ralov repeated his well-known study as Gennaro, the fisherman, with Kirsten, his wife, as Teresina. The third act will be danced in America and Canada, when the company visits there for the first time during the autumn. But more important to my mind, is the fact that they are taking over also Balanchine's *Night Shadow*, which I still consider the most completely satisfying ballet I have seen, as presented by the Danes, with Delfau's weird grotto setting, and supremely beautiful dancing by Henning Kronstam—much their finest male dancer for such parts—and Margrethe Schanne as the shadow. The ballet should be a model for choreographers and designers alike.

Only one ballet fell below the company's usual very high standard. *Chopiniana*, as they call *Les Sylphides*, was destroyed for anyone with ears to hear, by the grotesque orchestration imposed on Chopin's music by an anonymous Dane who, I am told, was "a park composer". The tempi was tattered and torn, and the brass writing was absurd: it must be scrapped. Kronstam and Schanne, and other fine dancers could not battle successfully against such odds. It was followed by *Petrouchka* in which Børge Ralov repeated his personal study as the puppet, with his wife as the ballerina, and Svend Erik Larsen danced the Moor. Niels Bjørn Larsen, who now becomes director of the pantomime theatre in Tivoli, acted the charlatan almost as well as Dr. Coppélius whose Swanilda was, of course, petite Inge Sand, with Bjørnsson as Franz.

The other ballets presented were *Prince Igor*, Dolin's *Pas de Quatre* with Pagni's quaintly attractive music, and Ashton's *Romeo and Juliet* which was staged twice. Last year I was less impressed by the new ballet than I am now, and this I attribute largely to an improvement in its presentation, as well as the fact that such a work is too complex to yield itself completely on first acquaintance. *Romeo* was again danced by Kronstam—ideal for the part—though Erik Bruhn took it on the second evening. I did not enjoy Kirsten Petersen's interpretation of Juliet as much as that given by Mona Vangsaa last year (July issue: *BALLET TODAY*). On the other hand Frank Schaufuss was a much more brilliant Mercutio than Stanley Williams had been: I feel confident that he will become an excellent ballet master for the company.

The festival again attracted many visitors and critics from abroad. Replying to a speech by the head of the National Travel Association of Denmark, Mr. John Martin, ballet critic of the *New York Times*, admitted that the final festival performance (*La Sylphide* and *Graduation Ball*) was among the finest half dozen ballet evenings he had witnessed over the last 30 years. He praised, too, the perfection of Copenhagen as a festival city: ballet and music enhance the natural beauty of a great northern capital awakening to the spring. A visit to the home of the historic Royal Danish Ballet is important for all admirers of the dance. Svend Kragh-Jacobsen's new book "Royal Danish Ballet" is itself an invitation.

BALLET IN BERMUDA

A TRIBUTE TO BALLET

I AM not a Ballet student, I am not even a Ballet Fan in the usual sense. However I would like to pay a tribute to Ballet. I want to pay this tribute because of the result of the teaching of Ballet in Bermuda.

The teaching of Ballet in Bermuda is in many respects no different from what it is elsewhere. However the significance of the result is a great deal more marked. In order to realise the importance one must have some idea of Bermuda's position.

It is a small island on the American side of the Atlantic. Like so many small places is very largely untouched by that important but intangible something known as culture, meaning by that a general knowledge and appreciation of the Arts.

It is a British colony, but so far from Britain that only purposeful organisation and expenditure of large sums of money would make it possible for the masses to receive the best that is British. Neither is forthcoming.

It would require less organisation and less money to receive the best that is American. However we are too British to make too much attempt to receive the culture that is American. Nevertheless we are close enough to America to be strongly influenced by the Americanization which can be obtained cheaply, which means comic books, chewing gum, Western films and gangster novels. This influx of bad influence, without the counter-balancing effect of the best of either country means that Bermuda suffers more from a lack of culture than do many other places equally small.

The result is that the masses and their children read few good books, see few good plays and have little appreciation for good music and good art. They appreciate beauty only in a vague manner.

Add to all this the fact that Bermudians are most materialistic, they spend money only on that which can be touched and handled.

It was in this atmosphere of unappreciative hard-headedness that an ambitious and hopeful Ballet teacher began her Ballet school two years ago—Ballet, which is the most recently accepted of all the Arts. Her efforts were directed towards the masses. The response was not encouraging. In the first term there were twenty pupils. It was generally assumed that this new feature in the life of Bermuda would be short-lived—after all this was Bermuda. During the following summer and Christmas term registration increased only slightly.

Then came Christmas. The teacher knew her community. She knew that before her classes could increase she would have to prove to the parents that their money would be spent in a worthwhile manner. That called for a display of what had already been done. She would have to appeal, above all else, to their love of colour. That called for very bright costumes and scenery. At the same time she had to prove to the audience that Ballet was not a night club activity. She certainly could not merge her Ballet with tap or acrobatic. Bermudians have no objection to being entertained by night club performers, but

generally speaking, they have no desire to see their own offspring in that role.

She put on her show. That did it. The colour and form made a swift and strong appeal. The applause was spontaneous and sustained. There was encore after encore. The significance of this as a tribute to Ballet is seen when one knows that Bermudians are noted for their lack of expressiveness. So much so that there is a story which claims that on the occasion of the Queen's visit a plan was under consideration whereby people would be hired to applaud as she passed.

Perhaps the strongest appeal was actually to the vanity of the parents who saw their offsprings under the theatre light in lovely costumes, looking most graceful and beautiful. In any event the enrolment promptly jumped to several hundred.

The children love it. It is probably the innate desire for bodily expression which appeals to the child. The parents now love it because they believe that it will make of their ugly ducklings graceful swans and even materialists spend money to satisfy their pride in their young.

In the process of learning the fundamentals of Ballet the children have been introduced to musical classics. Those sections have become familiar. Because they have become familiar in pleasant associations the children have learned to love them and eventually to learn and love the whole.

There are lovers of music who decry the appreciation of music as a by-product. But this has introduced the classics into homes which previously thought of them only as high-brow music.

They have learned, too, to appreciate Art and Drama as it is allied to the Ballet. Their Ballet class is completely voluntary. There is no compulsion. They do it because they want to do it. Thus it has taken Art and Music out of the school Curriculum and made them a part of the children's chosen recreation.

But perhaps the greatest tribute is that it has given them a reason for reading—other than the comics. Because they love Ballet they want to read all that they can about it. Now, instead of comics, or at least in addition to comics there are books on the Origin of Ballet, Russian Ballet, and stories of the great Ballet Dancers. The fact that their field is perhaps limited at present is unimportant. The important thing is that Ballet has created in them a desire to listen, to see and to read. I believe that this desire will be extended gradually to other fields.

The appeal of Ballet on whatever grounds is undeniable. It can be depended upon to continue to widen the horizons and interest of the children of the masses—and therefore of the masses.

This then, is why I pay tribute to the Ballet. If it can in its least developed stages plant seeds of appreciation for the Arts in so unproductive a soil as we have here, what would not be possible if it were presented in all its glory.

EVA HODGSON

CAREERS IN PICTURES

This month's story of Nadia Nerina is the first in this new series. Other famous ballerinas will be featured as often as we have sufficient space available, amongst them—Beryl Grey, Svetlana Beriosova, and Rowena Jackson. To make certain that you do not miss any you must place a regular order with your newsagent or bookstall, or you can fill up the attached subscription form and send to us. Your copy will then reach you through the post on the day of publication.

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SURBITON, SURREY.

MEET THE THEATRE BALLET

BY

SONIA ROBERTS



Left: Sara Neil

Above: Anne Heaton

Right: Margaret Hill

Photos: Denis de Marney and
Houston Rogers

THE return to London of Anne Heaton, at the head of the company with which she first found fame, is an important event, not only in the history of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet, but in British ballet in general. Every ballet company has a composite personality, built up from the amalgamation of the talents and characteristics of its individual members. However, if a company is to be truly successful there must be one central figure, who, in the public mind, personifies the united efforts and aims of the whole company. Sometimes this role is accorded to the impresario or artistic director, sometimes it is the premier danseur who takes precedence, more usually it is the ballerina, whom the audience select as the symbolic representation of the company and by whose performances the dancers measure the quality of their own.

When it comes to the Theatre Ballet Anne Heaton is the ideal dancer for the job. She returns partly because she prefers the dramatic type of role, *Giselle* is her favourite, and in the larger company there was little scope to enlarge this side of her work. Dark haired and dynamic, with the traditional chignon hair-style, Anne Heaton on and off stage looks every inch a ballerina. For so long named by the critics as a promising young dancer Anne Heaton lends to the company she leads just that extra something in maturity and polish, that is impossible for any dancer who has only worked in one company to achieve.

However, it was not so long ago that Heaton herself was a student, although she recalls that the Theatre Ballet of those days was by no means so highly organised. She feels in many ways, this was a good thing, because it accustomed the student dancer to the day to day routine of ballet company life.

This Birmingham born ballerina believes that ballet is a full time business which leaves no time for organised hobbies. After Anne Heaton has done the domestic chores, all she has time for is a quick browse round her local antique shop. She has no special passion in the choice of collectors' pieces, but she does have an eye for arresting and unusual jewellery.

Margaret Hill, also hails from Birmingham. To my mind the talents of this artist, are seldom appreciated to the extent they deserve. On her day, Margaret Hill can produce the most spine chilling *Giselle* mad scene. The pathos of other dancers, may reduce one to tears, but only Margaret Hill has the power to make me want to crawl under my seat, rather than witness the extraordinarily realistic mental crack-up going on before my eyes. It is possible that, unconsciously, Margaret Hill draws her inspiration for this portrayal from her leisure pursuits of visiting the cinema and reading detective stories. Margaret Hill's career has been a steady alternation between the Rambert and Theatre Ballet companies. She was originally trained at the Doris Cope School but after three months at the Rambert School she was taken into the company, and during the 1947 Australian tour, she was its youngest member. She joined the Theatre Ballet in 1952 as a soloist and returned to Rambert a year later, she rejoined the Theatre Ballet for the last time in May, 1955.

Although Alexander Bennett is now a member of the Theatre Ballet, he will not be easily able to forget his Rambert days, for his Notting Hill Gate home overlooks the site of the Mercury Theatre. During

his early Rambert days, the company was appearing in a tough working class district in the provinces. The audience were well behaved, until the appearance of Bennett wearing the full classic rig, which was greeted with amused catcalls. Nothing daunted, Bennett continued with his solo, and danced with such verve that at the end of the performance the same audience accorded him the biggest ovation of the evening. A Scot, from North Edinburgh, Bennett came south to bury his desire to go on the stage in a job at the foreign office. Although it held up his training Bennett never regrets this excursion into another side of working life because he feels that it gave an invaluable insight into all types of character. It also provided him with the opportunity to study foreign languages. Alexander Bennett who spent his national service period studying Russian has a theory that musicality is a great help to the student of languages, because the ear is already trained in accurate distinguishing of sound.

Miro Zolan came to the Theatre Ballet to teach and not to dance. Originally he gave, together with Ailne Phillips, the company's academic classes. Zolan was born in Prague thirty-one years ago and his real name is Miroslav Zlochovsky but when he came to England in 1947 to appear with the International Ballet, he shortened this to Miro Zloch. Together with his wife, Sandra Vane, he has also appeared in Australia where he produced *Sleeping Princess* for the Borovansky Ballet.

A dancer, whose career has been very different from the varied pattern enjoyed by Miro Zolan, is Donald MacLeary. This tall dancer is more than any other a product of the Wells Organisation. It is usual for a dancer to be recommended for admission after showing promise with their local teacher. MacLeary, who was born in Glasgow, entered the Sadler's Wells School in 1951, at the age of thirteen, and has received his entire training from them.

For piquantly pretty Sara Neil, however, joining the Sadler's Wells Ballet meant a journey from the other side of the world, for her home is in Wellington, New Zealand. Sara, is seen to advantage both from a dancing and a decorative viewpoint in *Dances Concertantes*. For this ballerina life revolves round the theatre, and she is an avid attendant of other peoples performances, both in ballet and the straight theatre. She also likes concerts, and collects pottery and jewellery.

Doreen Tempest also likes jewellery but prefers to concentrate on the collection of unusual ear-rings. This dancer who is remarkable for the autocratic nature of her *Odette-Odile*, began dancing as a cure for shyness. She is a Londoner whose home is at Streatham Her other interests are ballroom dancing and the cinema.

Also born and bred a Londoner is premier danseur Donald Britton, who in two respects can claim the title "father of the company". He is one of its oldest inhabitants for he joined the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet at its inception. He left to dance at Covent Garden, but after absence to fulfil his national service he returned to the smaller company, where he has been ever since. In 1952 he married Maureen Bruce, then a principal dancer with the company, and the couple have one son. Should junior require a new toy to amuse him, father is just the man to send for, because his hobby is model making. This interest is a hangover from the days when Donald Britton intended to be an engineer.

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MEN IN BALLET



David Blair

Seen above in *Sleeping Beauty*

Photo: Paul Wilson

Text by SONIA ROBERTS

WHAT is the secret of David Blair's success? Tragically often dancers, who within the more limited scope of the Theatre Ballet, show immense promise, fail to survive their transfer to Covent Garden. However, Blair far from wilting when exposed to the broader horizons in the senior company established himself as a dancer of the same pre-eminence he enjoyed at Islington.

Hard work is part of the answer. David Blair believes that a dancer is not happy unless he is working at top pressure. "If one drops training, muscles soon get slack," he explains, "and feeling out of condition is the way to feel miserable." During the past three months David Blair has prepared four major classic works, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Princess*, *Cinderella* and *Giselle*. During this period, he has averaged six rehearsal hours a day, plus performances plus the daily class, costume fittings and any extra run-through requested by his ballerina. Although he admits that this schedule is a heavy one, he feels that work in general was much harder in the smaller company where a dancer might well have to appear in each of three ballets in the course of an evening.

Blair has wanted to be a dancer, since at the age of eight, he saw a performance given by the Anglo-Polish Ballet. After seeing this, he so pestered his sister to teach him the routines and steps she was learning at Madame Ibbetson's school, that his mother suggested it might be easier for the whole household, if he too attended the classes. At the age of fourteen, he won a scholarship to the Wells School. A year later, while still a student he made occasional appearances with the company. His first big chance with the Theatre Ballet came, when he was offered the role of "a vagabond" in Philip Burke's ballet *The Vagabonds*.

Knowing that the Theatre Ballet's director Peggy Van Praagh would be out front watching, David Blair danced his role with zest and vigour, but apparently when the casting took place, everyone had forgotten that fifteen year old Blair was very small and stockily built for his age. The sight of a determined but squarish little figure, its cherubically youthful face masked by an enormous beard of make-up proved too much for the audience, who were convulsed with laughter. So, far from being congratulated, as he had hoped, the disappointed dancer was removed from the role the same evening. Blair longed for the day when the role might again be his, but in the meantime there was nothing to do but wait. As the months passed without any noticeable growth David Blair saw his prospect of becoming a classical dancer receding, then suddenly, shortly after his sixteenth birthday, he shot up in height, his line improved. He was now able to tackle, not only the Vagabond, but the lead in the same ballet, and he began the first stage of his career proper by studying the *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Princess* pas de trois.

It was during this period with the Theatre Ballet he began pas de deux classes under the tuition of Anton Dolin. It was Dolin who first taught him the role of the *Nutcracker* Prince.

Physically David Blair is lucky enough to be equipped with most of the attributes expected of fairy princes and looked for in those called upon to portray them within the confines of classical ballet. Dark and personable he has almost an Italian cast of feature, and he is able to illuminate the traditionally passive danseur noble profile with flashing dark eyes in the manner of the younger Dolin. There is a touch too of his former tutor in the way, while still according proper deference to his ballerina, he is able to take an unembarrassed command of the stage. Blair walks well and is able to wear even unflattering period costumes with a certain air. All this, has made the boy from Halifax a worthy counterpart to the exotically dazzling Elvin, and he is stunned by the news of her retirement.

For David Blair, the pas de deux is the most exciting application of his art, and one of the most important facets of what he regards as the best season of his career, has been the opportunity to dance with this ballerina. He says "Although on stage, it is always the man who must remember to hold her hand and support the ballerina in just the way she likes, because she is dependent on his assistance in partnership minor adjustments have to be made on both sides. One morning's work with a ballerina will be sufficient to tell if enough initial sympathy exists. It has been a wonderful experience to work with Elvin, and to me it seems terrible that it must end after only six months."

David Blair's favourite role is in the ballet *Harlequin in April*. He enjoys this Cranko role, because it was created for him. David Blair likened a role built round a particular dancer to a made to measure suit, and a role merely inherited to an off the peg garment. "No one can ever replace Massine as the Miller in *Tricorne*," he said, "Massine is the Miller and the Miller Massine." "However classical ballet is a different matter. In my opinion, a great role is great, because it provides infinite scope for individual interpretation."

Although he believes sincerely, in the importance of the individual,

Continued on page 21

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As I See It

Contd. from page 8

(for she has still another alias, Mrs. P. J. Hindle-Briscall). Some months ago, however, the famous Kathak dancer Sitara saw her perform a few Kathak *tukras*, and was so impressed that she began to badger Marianne Balchin to get back into training: Sitara refused to admit that a mere baby could be allowed to interfere with anything as serious as dancing. This pressure, coming from the supreme exponent of Lucknowi Kathak, had the effect one would expect, and no doubt we shall, in due course, see Marianne Balchin dancing in England again. But she is tired of having to pass herself off as an Indian: from now on she will dance under her English name.

I have been fortunate enough to work with a number of the greatest Indian dancers, including exponents of all five of the classical styles, and I have good reason to know how impossible it is for a non-Indian to master even one classical Indian style. There are a number of subtleties of attack, use of eyes and neck, changes of tension in hands, and so on, which defeat European and American dancers, no matter how hard and long they work; and the complexities of Indian *talas* (rhythmic phrases) are so great that they defeat even the most intelligent of Western musicians, much less Western dancers. Moreover all Indian classical dancing is closely associated with Hindu religion and reflects characteristic Hindu attitudes to the various deities in a way which a non-Hindu can never assimilate. When, therefore, I watch Marianne Balchin performing items in four different Indian classical styles with sensitive and expert attention to the subtleties of each, doing justice to the careful training of each of her masters, I know that I am watching something which is theoretically impossible. It is a strange and delightful experience, all the more moving because I cannot account for it.

Men in Ballet

Contd. from page 19

David Blair has an equable temperament that allows him to fit easily into a large highly disciplined unit like the Sadler's Wells Ballet. Blair also has the ability to take new experiences in his stride. The fact that he is now a fully-fledged star of the Opera House has not made him move into the Rolls Royce owning classes. He is still content to let London Transport buses deliver him at the door of his Regent's Park home after the show each night.

For David Blair, coming to the senior company was a gradual process of integration, and not the shock of a suddenly changed environment felt by some dancers. He feels that he was lucky going on tour so soon after his arrival. "During tours, the company is thrown together much more than is possible in London. This provides a wonderful opportunity to get to know people." However, as a means of seeing the world, David Blair feels that ballet company tours are much overrated. "One feels that in the course of a week's stay, everything of importance must be seen. At the end all that is left is a confused general impression."

However, Blair was so impressed by his first glimpse of Italy, on tour, that he will holiday there this year. "I was fascinated by the tempi of living, the way of life and the people, and of course a land where the greatest art treasures are always only just around the corner, has an instant appeal for me."

Most of David Blair's leisure interests centre round show business. He likes to see ballet performed but feels it is impossible for a trained dancer to extract the same pleasure as a layman. "However hard the dancer tries to gain an overall impression he becomes engrossed in technicalities."

David Blair is a frequent visitor to his local cinema, although he likes to choose his film carefully with due attention to the newspaper reviews. His pet hate at the pictures, is the historical epic but he is not averse to all forms of spectacular entertainment. He likes the opera and he loves the circus.

Finally I found out something which, although it is not the kind of quality Princess Aurora would ever have sought in her Florimund, helps to put David Blair even higher on my list of present day fairy princes. He likes cooking. His specialities are casseroles, because they can safely be left to simmer while he is at the theatre.

Back numbers of the following are still available:—

Men in Ballet series

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Please make a note of this date.

The next issue of *BALLET TODAY* will be a combined one (August/September) and will be published on 24th August.

NEW RECORDS

Reviewed by BEDFORD CROWLE

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET SILVER JUBILEE. *Royal Opera House Orchestra (Irving)*. HMV. CLP.1070.

I have no hesitation in paying tribute to this birthday present to the Sadler's Wells Ballet's twenty-fifth anniversary. It ranges from Lord Berner's *Lord of Burleigh* to Prokofiev's *Cinderella* and includes extracts from nine ballets performed during those years. The selection is excellent, and though for some of us our favourite ballet may be omitted, that is inevitable in any collection of this kind. The chanting of Gertrude Stein's witty words in *Wedding Bouquet* is well put over by the Covent Garden chorus, though no one will ever forget Constant Lambert and his megaphone during the war years. The orchestra, Robert Irving, the technicians and all concerned are to be heartily congratulated.

LIEUTENANT KIJÉ AND THE LOVE OF THREE ORANGES SUITES (*Prokofiev*). *Paris Conservatoire Orchestra and L.P.O. respectively (Boult)*. Decca LXT 5119.

Lieutenant Kije was originally written as music for a film but also accompanied Fokine's last ballet, *Russian Soldier*, which he created for Ballet Theatre. Sir Adrian Boult gives fine, witty performances of both suites, even though you may not have thought of them as his cup of tea. The second suite compares most favourably with Malko's excellent version, HMV. CLP.1060, reviewed last March. The recording is excellent.

SONATAS IN D, K576 AND IN G, K283, VARIATIONS K455 AND K283 (*Mozart*). *Walter Gieseking (piano)*. Columbia 33CX1345.

Those who saw and enjoyed Phillipe Perrotet's ballet, *Sonata in D*, for the City Ballet Society, will certainly want this record. Each work has its own particular charm which is fully brought out by a pianist of Gieseking's calibre. Certainly no one is his peer as an interpreter of Mozart, and such is his understanding of this composer that, for me, he tops the bill. The recording is very good and I am confident that you would have no regrets.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION (*Moussorgsky*). *Eugene Malinin (piano)*. Columbia 33C1045.

It is much more usual these days to hear Ravel's wonderful orchestration of his work and so it is very interesting to have it in its original version for the piano. I find this young Russian's approach, by and large, more sensitive than Pennario's, Capitol CCL7525, but should you waver over choice of interpretation, then the vastly superior recording of the present disc cannot fail to tip the balance in its favour. This music was part of Julian Algo's ballet, *Visions*.

PIANO CONCERTO No. 2 (*Rachmaninov*). *Curzon (piano)*, L.P.O. (*Boult*). Decca LXT 5178.

Walter Gore's *Winter Night* is one of his finest ballets, and its highly romantic and emotional qualities are well suited to Rachmaninov's style. Its first performance at Hammersmith caused many a long discussion. Unfortunately, so far I have not heard my ideal LP record of the music. On the whole, I have nothing but praise for the present one—both Curzon and Boult give a remarkable performance. So it grieves me to say that the recording is not equally as good. If only the string tone was a little rounder and some of the crescendi a little less strident. But hear it—you may feel the interpretation is worth it.

STRING QUARTET No. 2 (*Prokofiev*). STRING QUARTET No. 4 (*Malipiero*). *Quartetto Italiano*. Columbia 33CX1295.

It was to Prokofiev that Robbins went for the music of his ballet, *Quartet*, and although the New York City Ballet gave it a fine first performance in 1954, it encountered much criticism. The Quartetto Italiano's reading here may not be exceptional but it is, nevertheless, good. Unfortunately, the recording has a hard and edgy tone which is prominent enough to worry some of us. The same may be said, generally, of Malipiero's difficult work.

On the reverse side to a collection of overtures on Parlophone PMC1031, is a suite from Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmilla*—the overture and ballet music. Although Glinka is the father of Russian music, this is much more French in atmosphere and most attractive, too. Fistioulari and the Philharmonia Orchestra give a fine performance and the recording is excellent. When Massine used Borodin's *Second Symphony* for his ballet, *Bogatyr*, he added the well-known third movement of this composer's *Second String Quartet* as an overture. The Armenian State String Quartet's interpretation, Columbia 33CX1334, is fair but not helped by the tone of the first violin. It is coupled with a better performance on the only LP recording of Shostakovich's *First Quartet*.

Violetta Elvin leaves the Wells



VIOLETTA Elvin's resignation from the Sadler's Wells Company came as a surprise to all of us, and whilst we are naturally saddened by the news, for Violetta has established herself firmly in the affections of the British public, we wish her every happiness in her marriage and future life. Violetta Elvin has danced in many countries as guest star, amongst them Brazil, Sweden,

Denmark and Italy, and in all these countries she has had enthusiastic audiences. "England is my second country" she says "and so perhaps I am a little prejudiced when I say that the warmth of an English audience is not exceeded anywhere".

Miss Elvin was born in Russia and received her ballet training in the National Ballet School. She had just completed her

training when the war drew very near to Moscow. The office in which her father worked was moved to a safety zone, for security reasons, and he was allowed to take his family with him. Thus the young Violetta found herself during the most impressionable and formative period of her life, stranded far away in the Province of Usbec, near the border of Afghanistan. Remote as it was, the place had

its own theatre and ballet company, which Violetta joined. One half of each week was devoted to the classical repertoire, and the other to local Art, which included opera as well as dancing. Violetta was impressed by the character of the local people—their passionate intensity, and the things that moved them. Their dancing was very similar in character to that of India, with a multitude of intricate and very expressive hand, arm and head movements, whilst footwork was confined to very small steps. The observations she made during this period, she feels, will influence her for the rest of her life. Miss Elvin made her debut in *Swan Lake*, and this has always remained her best loved ballet, and the *Swan Princess* her favourite role.

On marriage to an Englishman in 1945 Miss Elvin left Moscow, where she had been with the Bolshoi and Stanislavski Theatres, and joined the Sadler's Wells Company when it first appeared at Covent Garden. She has remained with them since, and has appeared in almost every leading classical role. Her first major role was in *Rake's Progress*, and this was quite an achievement for a Russian girl in such an essentially English character. With the exception of *Coppelia*, which has never particularly interested her, she has appeared in all the full length ballets at Covent Garden, as well as taking part in *Don Juan*, *Checkmate*, *Symphonic Variations*, *Don Quixote*, *Tricorne*, *Boutique Fantasque*, *Tiresias*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Homage to the Queen* and *Firebird*. When she danced at La Scala, Milan a special arrangement of Dance of the Hours in *La Gioconda* was made for her by Massine, and he also arranged a special *Witches Ballet* in *Macbeth* for her. She also danced *Petrouchka* in Milan. In Russia she took part in many



Left :

Giselle

Right :

Sleeping Beauty

Photos : Baron



Left :

The Firebird

Right :

Swan Lake

Photos :
Houston Rogers



ballets not known here. One of her favourites at the Bolshoi was *Crimson Sails*, in which she had the very interesting role of the Mother, in the Prologue. In the Russian *Don Quixote* she took the part of 'one of the friends of Kitry' also of one of the swans in *Swan Lake*. She appeared in *Nutcracker* (which is done quite differently in Russia) and also had a solo part in the last act of *Sleeping Princess*, as well as many

other roles in ballets unknown outside Russia.

Asked to name her favourite partner, Miss Elvin replied that during the time she has been in England, many fine male dancers have developed, and it would be invidious for her to single out any one, as all her partners have been first-rate. They have included John Hart, John Field, David Blair and Anton Dolin.

Miss Elvin is a woman of very

wide interests, she speaks English perfectly and is fluent in many other languages. She has many hobbies—and domestic virtues. She decorated her own flat in London, and can cook and sew, although she modestly avers she has no great talent for such occupations. She always gives her whole mind to anything she does. She has a collection of gramophone records and spends many happy hours playing them

over. She is also a keen chess player, and plays this game well. Should she decide to give up ballet altogether she will not find it difficult to fill her leisure hours in retirement, but we cannot believe that this will be the case at this, the zenith, of her career. Of one thing she can be certain, if she returns to dance in England, there will always be an enthusiastic audience waiting to welcome her.

ALL THE STARS

*Margot Fonteyn
Alicia Markova
Nadia Nerina
Svetlana Beriosova
Violetta Elvin
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